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Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management

MASSACHUSETTS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY PILOT PROJECT

The Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and our partners, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Historic Massachusetts, Inc. and The Trustees of Reservations, are initiating a comprehensive inventory of significant scenic and cultural landscapes around the state beginning with a pilot project within three Massachusetts watersheds. This inventory will build and expand upon the 1982 Massachusetts Landscape Inventory and will be an archive of the Massachusetts landscape of the 20th Century with preservation and protection strategies for the 21st. The comprehensive survey will include scenic, cultural and historic landscapes which may include working agricultural landscapes, industrial grounds, estates, town centers, cemeteries and burial grounds, gardens, roads and trails, ocean beaches and dunes, archaeological sites, gardens and other designed and vernacular landscapes that define the character of a community.

WHY DO WE NEED THE INVENTORY AND WHO BENEFITS?

The Commonwealth's landscapes profoundly affect the ways in which our communities look, feel and work. Over the last decade, our landscapes have been altered dramatically as growth patterns have changed and open spaces have given way to subdivisions and shopping malls. The information available in this inventory will provide a valuable tool for all communities concerned with community preservation and planning for growth.

The project, which starts and ends at the local level, is an opportunity for communities to identify and protect the landscapes that make each community unique. Communities, state and local agencies, and private organizations will benefit from the comprehensive survey information and protection strategies which will include information on available tools such as the grant and acquisition programs within the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and its agencies.

GOALS OF THE INVENTORY

- Focus public attention on the broad range of scenic and cultural landscapes that are not fully protected, and on the variety, quality, and richness of these examples throughout Massachusetts.
- Encourage land conservation and historic preservation agencies and organizations to work together more closely on matters of shared interest.
- Develop more effective landscape protection strategies for state agencies, municipalities and non-profit organizations to employ, working collaboratively whenever possible.
- Alert communities and landowners to the value of protecting and linking scenic and cultural landscapes in a mutually reinforcing network. Experience has shown that greater awareness on the part of landowners will lead to significant conservation opportunities.
- Provide a framework for conservation planning and priority setting by agencies and organizations committed to landscape protection.
- Encourage municipalities and private organizations to become more active and effective in carrying out conservation and preservation projects in a strategic manner.

APPROACH

Using a watershed-based planning approach, the inventory will be a comprehensive survey of the state's most valuable scenic and cultural landscapes. The project will begin with a pilot phase using proposed watershed areas, of the the Taunton River and Buzzards Bay watersheds. The Taunton River/Buzzards Bay watersheds offer a unique opportunity for DEM to test the methodology on the region's diverse landscapes which include coastal and estuarine scenery, urban centers, working farms and woodlands, to name a few. The need for this inventory is underscored by the intense growth pressures facing the communities of the Taunton River and Buzzards Bay watersheds. The pilot watersheds have strong regional planning organizations and a variety of land trusts which will provide opportunities for linkages with the communities.

The pilot phase will allow us to test, evaluate and refine the methodology before the statewide inventory is launched. During the pilot phase, the public will have an important role in the project planning. Through a series of outreach meetings, members of the public will be asked to define their community's most valued landscapes. And very importantly, the pilot phase will also help to determine the most cost effective means to complete the comprehensive survey throughout all watersheds within the state.

Throughout this pilot phase, consultation with advisory and technical groups will occur on a statewide, regional and internal EOEA basis. DEM will consult with the statewide advisory committee to establish the methodology for this program, the landscape criteria and protection strategies. A regional steering committee will help DEM establish connections with local organizations and individuals during the outreach and constituency building phase. DEM will consult with an internal EOEA technical team to help troubleshoot issues throughout the process.

STEPS

Research: Conduct a nationwide search for similar inventories and information to help define the methodology. Research existing information for communities within pilot watersheds housed at MHC (inventory forms) and EOEA (open space plans). Meet with regional planning agencies within the pilot areas to determine whether communities are engaging in similar projects on a local level. From all of this research, develop best practices to apply to Massachusetts' inventory program.

Evaluation: Through a users' survey, asses the 1982 Landscape Inventory's methodology, utility and preferences for format content. Definition of regional context statements based along watersheds yet consistent with the MHC regional studies.

Outreach: Distribute "kick-off" letter introducing the project to municipal officials and boards, legislators, land trusts, regional planning agencies and interested organizations. Follow-up with a workshop in one of the pilot communities to engage the advisory committees and constituents to discuss findings of the research and evaluation stage. Host Secretary-led town meetings to help raise awareness and appreciation for scenic and cultural landscape resources. Conduct meetings with legislators and municipal officials from pilot watershed communities. Develop a communication plan including strategies for press releases, op-ed articles, brochure and website development and identification of relevant conferences and workshops.

Launch Pilot Project in Representative Watersheds: Refine methodology, retain a consultant (s), and complete Massachusetts Historical Commission inventory forms.

Once these steps are completed, the pilot phase will be evaluated and documented in a report. The report will document the steps taken and methodology utilized and recommend funding strategies for the statewide inventory. With the evaluation of the pilot phase complete, the inventory will progress throughout all

watersheds of the state; protection and preservation strategies will be developed and the inventory report will be produced in printed and electronic forms. Outreach to communities will be continued through technical assistance.

SCHEDULE

The pilot phase will be completed by June 2000.

MARKETING THE INVENTORY

A communication and marketing plan will be developed for use statewide and within the pilot watersheds. The plan will include:

- Kick-off Forum in the pilot watersheds with members of an advisory committees, local officials and public to generate excitement and interest in the inventory initiative.
- Secretary-led town meetings to engage and expand constituencies of community preservation highlighting the inventory initiative as a way to identify and preserve significant landscapes.
- Interactive website linked through EOEA's site asking Massachusetts residents to nominate landscapes of special community significance.
- Nominate the inventory work as a Millennium project seeking federal and foundation grants.
- Op-Ed articles for submission in newsletters and local news media.
- Sponsoring sessions and interactive exhibits at conferences, like the Massachusetts Historical Commission's annual conference in September.
- Design of a brochure, fact sheet, postcards, posters and other marketing items to be distributed in schools, libraries, etc.

PRODUCTS

- Compilation of Nationwide Search Results/Evaluation of Best Practices.
- Completed MHC Inventory Forms.
- Comprehensive Inventory Atlas by Watersheds in Printed and Electronic Formats using GIS and Mixed Media (video, stills, drawings, satellite images).
- Protection Strategies (site-specific, local, regional and statewide).
- Report of the Pilot Phase to Document Methodology and Recommend Funding Strategies.
- Technical Assistance to Communities by DEM Staff to Help Promote Protection Strategies.
- Curricula Development (K-12)
- Citizen's Guide to the Heritage Landscape Inventory

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Patrice Kish, Director, Office of Historic Resources
Tel: 617-626-1378
Internet: patrice.kish@state.ma.us

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